

Stamford Harbor Master's Report 9/12/2017

Supplemental Report to Harbor Safety Committee

This supplementary report details a safety patrol that was undertaken by the Harbor Master (in the 'marked' Harbor Commission/Master boat) on Sunday September 10th between 11:00 and 15:35 local time (4½ hours). Nothing in this report is intended or should be interpreted as criticism of any personnel assigned or serving with the Stamford Police Harbor Unit.

The intent is to help quantify the safety and compliance issues that are present in Stamford Harbor due, in large part, to the continued lack of 'official' presence on the water at times of high recreational use that may not be accurately reflected in available official statistics.

Matters dealt with (in the federal channel from the outer breakwater to the fuel terminal in the West Branch) included;

- 11 boats/boaters spoken to regarding excess speed (10kts+/on the plane) in the harbor including the West Branch. The actions were blatant enough and in amongst other boats such that they could not be ignored. Each was given a Harbor Master business card giving my name and contact details.
 - 2 of these boaters were given full safety inspections revealing on one boat no required fire extinguisher, and on the second the occupants were using inflatable pfd's that must be worn, but which were not (being worn) and were stowed.
 - Of note, one of the boats was from the Carefree Boat Club, seen inbound at 20kts+ passing the 'wrong' side of the beacon south of K-Park as it turned left towards the West Branch. Conversation with the occupants revealed that they had no idea where they were, how the equipment worked or what the rules were. (Carefree Boat Club has been advised). This boat was also seen later out of control trying to dock in the path of the outbound oil barge detailed later.
- An oil sheen was reported by the manager of TGM marina.
 - I interviewed the crew of a Vane Brothers tug *Fort McHenry* attending an oil barge at the terminal. They had ceased cargo operations the previous evening, disconnected from shoreside facilities and recovered the spill-boom. Documentation confirmed that no internal oil transfers had taken place on the tug or barge.
 - I also interviewed the staff at the temporary fuel dock. They had earlier fueled a private boat (with diesel) and 'did not think' a spill or burp had occurred. They appeared to have little concern or idea of actions to take in the event of an accidental discharge.
 - Although it could not be confirmed, it is likely the sheen originated from a burp during fueling at the fuel dock. All trace of the sheen had disappeared within 1 ½ hours.
- At the request of the tug's Master, I assisted with the outbound passage of the tug and oil barge (*see figure 1*). Several incidents occurred during the passage worthy of note;
 - The previously mentioned Carefree Boats Club vessel was out of control trying to dock



Figure 1

Stamford Harbor Master's Report 9/12/2017

causing the tug/barge to back-down to reduce speed. The club dock staff were unaware of the approaching tug/barge when I spoke to them.

- Several boats were directed to wait outside the channel at the south end of the West Branch to allow safe passage. They all moved clear and I proceeded outwards. I heard the tug sound the Danger Signal (5-short blasts) behind me and saw that one small boat had moved back into the center of the channel, less than 100 yards in front of the tug/barge. I returned and (more or less) physically moved the boat from the channel with less than 30 yards clearance.
- Most boats in the main Federal Channel were easily moved out of the main channel to allow passage for the very clearly visible tug/barge. The exception was an inbound USCG-Aux boat which waited until the last possible moment to clear the channel.
- It is worth noting that the rental paddleboards/kayaks were not operating that day. Had they been so, the danger would have increased exponentially.

It must be accepted that the minimal personnel assigned to the Police Harbor Unit do an excellent job with the resources made available to them. The lack of resources is always attributed to other patrol commitments having higher priority. When I left Czescik Marina and travelled the 3.2 miles to my home near the Newfield Shopping center, I passed 7 city police vehicles, 6 marked and 1 unmarked.

Recreational boating activity will increase next year with the opening of the new boatyard, the inexperienced operators of the rental boats, kayaks and paddleboards and the very successful dock'n'dine restaurants. I believe that the priority given and resources allocated to safety and compliance on the water in Stamford Harbor must be reviewed before the start of the 2018 season in order to reduce the likelihood of a serious marine incident occurring in our waters.

Respectfully submitted

Captain Eric Knott

State Harbor Master